


Facebook for Journalists: More Work Than Twitter, but With a Bigger Payout



Last April Facebook launched a Page called [Journalists on Facebook](#) in an effort to encourage the news community to use the site's Page feature as a distribution and research tool. Historically, Twitter has been more popular with journalists. Thanks to its focus on link sharing, the additional distribution they can get thanks to the ease of re-tweeting, and the fact that it launched before Facebook Pages. But with [Facebook sporting as many as 10 times more active users](#), journalists should still be focused on mastering the social network, even if it takes more work than just tweeting copy and pasted URLs.


Twitter Is Quick and Simple


Twitter's Speed and Simplicity

 **washingtonpost** The Washington Post
Egyptian protesters defy military, return to Tahrir Square
[#Egypt](http://wapo.st/gILCsV)
6 hours ago

VS

Facebook's Rich Content

 **Washington Post**
As Egypt purges elements of its old order and struggles to find a new one, one man has emerged as perhaps the most hated symbol of corruption. The rise and fall of Ahmed Ezz: <http://wapo.st/fHf8IX>.

 **PROTESTS CONTINUE: Egyptian demonstrators defy military**
wapo.st
Anti-government demonstrators were back in Cairo's central square less than a day after military rulers forcibly broke up a protesters' camp there.

Twitter and Facebook offer different advantages to journalists. Twitter's short-form nature means journalists aren't expected to do much more than tweet the headlines and links to their articles, unless they also want to engage in discussion. Twitter's public nature discourages low quality replies, so journalists don't have to slog through thousands of comments the way they might on Facebook. It's also easy to measure impact and success, even if inaccurately, by counting re-tweets.

Facebook now even offers a Subscribe button to subscribe to individual's public posts much like Twitter has a follow button to follow others. Twitter though is un-personalized and that's a good thing as it provides unfiltered

access to news & information. Facebook though is built on personalization and offers social news reading applications like Washington Post Social Reader.

Facebook on the other hand, requires journalists to craft compelling updates that stand out against the social content produced by their audience's friends. Images, captions, and context have to be selected. Though comments to Page stories are also public, they're not as visible as @ replies to a user's own friends, leading large publications to receive hundreds of comments per post. While journalists want this engagement, many are too busy to actually wade through the comments and respond.

On Twitter, the line between personal and professional is easy to blur. A fledgling journalist can begin by tweeting out their articles amongst their more friendly updates, and slowly focus more on news coverage as they gain news-seeking followers outside their social circle. This transition is more difficult on Facebook. At some point, journalists have to start a Facebook Page from scratch with zero fans, or sacrifice their personal profile by turning it into a Page and converting their friends into fans using Facebook's new [profile to Page migration tool](#).

There's an air of mystery to the news feed that might be discouraging journalists. With Twitter, if you tweet it, it will appear in a follower's stream. But on Facebook, a journalist's updates might not make it into the Top News feed, requiring users to actively sift through their Most Recent feed to find a journalist's updates.

Twitter also had a head start, launching in July 2006 about a year before Facebook Pages, with top news outlets creating Twitter accounts in February and March of 2008. Facebook's personal profiles have been able to publish status updates since around the time that Twitter launched in 2006, but journalists could only accumulate up to 5,000 friends. This allowed Twitter to set the tone of shortform news distribution, while Pages have instead been framed as something that businesses and journalists have had to adapt to.

The Power of Facebook's Rich Content Posts and Applications



Facebook Pages holds great potential for journalists, though. Pages can post rich content such as photos or videos content with previews appearing in-line. The images and captions that appear beside posted links give users just enough information that they know they want to click through. Highly interactive posts, such as those using the [new Questions product](#), can engage users while simultaneously securing additional distribution for a journalist's posts.

Journalists can start their own Pages, as Facebook's [new initiative encourages](#), but even greater power is available from using a single Page to represent an entire news organization, as Facebook has been [promoting with its Facebook + Media Page](#) since last July. Pages are designed to facilitate multiple admins, unlike Twitter accounts, and aggregating fans to a single Page helps cross-promote the work of all of a news outlet's reporters and build a fan community.

The use of applications by journalists, something widely unexplored, could help them forge deeper bonds with users. They can collect email addresses to expand the breadth of channels through which they can content them. Many apps, designed especially for Pages, can also pull demographic and interest data, helping journalists gain insights about who their audience is. Liking a journalist's Page creates a link back to that Page in a user's news feed and profile, driving Likes from a fan's network much more effectively than Twitter's follower lists.

Larger publications willing to spend to increase their reach can use highly targeted Facebook ads to gain Likes, while Twitter's "Promoted Tweets" doesn't have self-serve tool, and doesn't provide the same level of granular targeting.

While Twitter is a natural distribution channel for news, it's not necessarily the most effective, nor does it have the widest reach. Most major publications still have more Twitter followers than Facebook fans, but that could change with time. While Facebook might require journalists to learn a new skill set and apply some effort, there is great long-term value to be gained from an investment in building an audience on Facebook.